Utricularia minor L.

lesser bladderwort

Lentibulariaceae (Bladderwort Family)

Status: State Review Group 1
Rank: G5S2NR

General Description: Adapted from Hitchcock et al. (1959) and Hickman (1993): *Utricularia minor* is a perennial aquatic herb without roots. The stems are both floating and creeping and up to 30 in. (75 cm) long. The floating stems have densely arranged leaves bearing some bladders, while the creeping stems have fewer leaves and more bladders. The winter buds are glabrous. The leaves are 1/8 to more than 1 in. (3-30 mm) long and are generally 3-parted at the base with each part irregularly 1 to 3 forked. The ultimate number of leaf segments is generally less than 16, and the leaves are linear, flat, and sometimes bristle-tipped. The inflorescence has 2 to 9 flowers on wiry peduncles 1 ½ to 6 in. (4-15 cm) long and less than 0.5 mm wide. The pedicel (individual flower stalk) has a leafy bract and becomes recurved (bent downward) when in fruit. The leafy bracts directly beneath the flowers are deeply 2-lobed. The yellow flowers are 2 to 3 3/16 in. (5-8 cm) long with two lips. The lower lip is twice the length of the upper lip and the sac-like spur, and is scarcely blocking the throat. The seed is not winged.

Identification Tips: Other bladderworts that occur in the same counties in Washington as *Utricularia minor* include *U. gibba, U. inflata, U. intermedia, U. macrorhiza, a*nd *U. ochroleuca.* All have yellow flowers. *U. minor* and *U. gibba* are the only species of this genus to have glabrous leaf margins, but *U. gibba* has winged seeds while *U. minor* does not. A technical key is recommended for identification.

Phenology: *Utricularia minor* flowers from June through August in Washington.

Range: This species is circumpolar and is found from Alaska south to California and Arizona, east to New Jersey, north to Greenland, and also in Eurasia. In Washington, *Utricularia minor* is found in Grays Harbor, Thurston, Pierce, Skamania, King, San Juan, Whatcom, Okanogan, Ferry, Pend Oreille, and Spokane counties.

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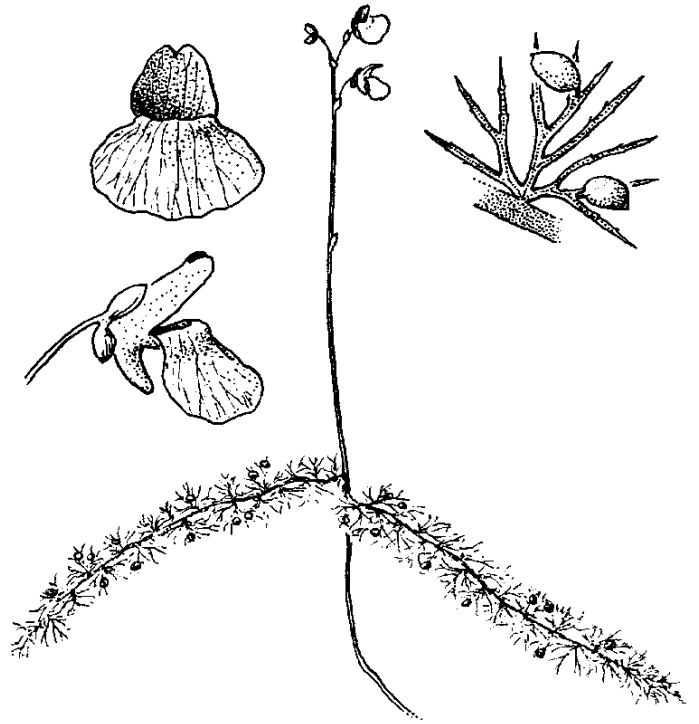
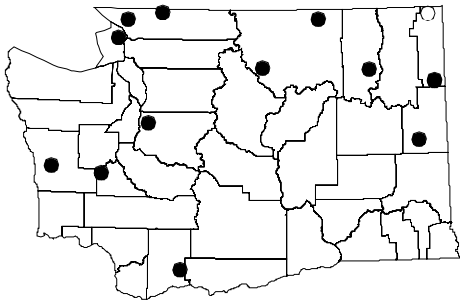


Illustration by Jeanne R. Janish

Known distribution of
Utricularia minor
in Washington



● Current (1980+)
○ Historic (older than 1980)

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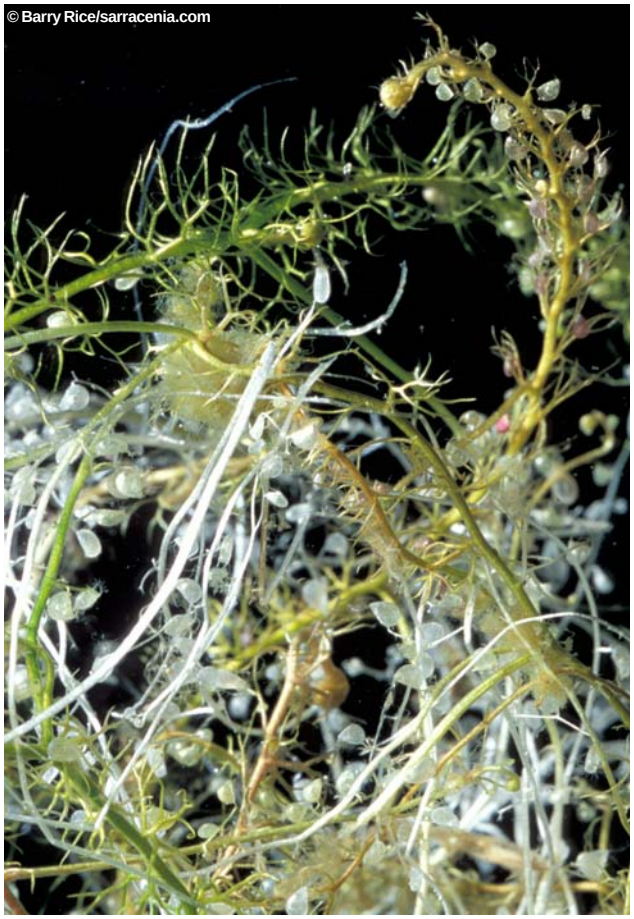

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Habitat: This species occurs in low nutrient lakes and peatbog pools in the lowland and montane zones at elevations from 135 to 4000 feet (40-1200 m) in Washington. Associated species found in Grays Harbor County include stonewort (*Nitella flexilis),* narrow-leaf burr-reed (*Sparganium angustifolium),* and greater bladderwort (*Utricularia macrorhiza).*

Ecology: *Utricularia minor* is an obligate wetland species.

State Status Comments: There are fewer than fifteen occurrences of this species in Washington. Because *Utricularia minor* was recently added to the Washington rare plant list, not much is known about the degree of its rarity in the state at this time.

Inventory Needs: The historical occurrences need to be revisited. Peatbogs and undisturbed lakes in western Washington should also be investigated.

Threats and Management Concerns: Recreational use of waterways and hydrologic alteration from land development are the greatest threat to this species. Water quality issues and exotic species may also pose threats to *Utricularia minor.*

References:

Douglas, G.W., G.B. Straley, D. Meidinger, and J. Pojar. 1999. *Illustrated Flora of British Columbia* vol. 3: *Dicotyledons (Diapensiaceae Through Onagraceae)*. Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, Victoria, British Columbia. 423 pp.

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Hitchcock, C.L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey, J.W. Thompson. 1959. *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest* Part 4: *Ericaceae Through Campanulaceae.* University of Washington Press, Seattle, WA. 510 pp.

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